Mr. President, I rise to address the issue of the Iraq

resolutions.

Tomorrow at 1:45, I will vote for cloture, and I do that for reasons

that I will set forth. I, like many of us, have to leave early this

afternoon. I have consolidated all my State obligations and speeches

between now and late tonight so I may return for the vote.

I want to go back and retrace the history of this debate. When I

returned from Iraq, with several other Senators, and Senator Levin with

me, at that time I was chairman of the Armed Services Committee and he

was ranking. I indicated to the Nation by way of a press conference

that I felt the situation was going sideways; that our strategy was not

working.

Initially, in the days following that, I was highly criticized for

those remarks. Eventually, however, others began to recognize the

situation as I had, and, indeed, the President, when he was asked

publicly if he supported the observations that I had made, said yes. I

commend the President for immediately swinging into full gear his whole

administration to study intensively the matters with regard to the

current strategy. It included work by the Baker-Hamilton group, which I

think played a very constructive role.

In the resolution which I prepared, with the assistance of Senator

Ben Nelson and Senator Collins, we make direct reference to that. I

bring up that background because the President then, on January 10,

announced his intention to go forward with a changed strategy.

Now, that was an open invitation to Members of Congress and others to

address this very important plan laid down by the President. Our group,

my 2 colleagues who worked with me, Senator Levin joining us later, and

a half dozen others, some 8 or 10, up almost to 12, joined in an honest

forthright way in accepting the President's offer. That is how this

started. In drawing up our resolution, we were careful to say, yes, we

had different views, but we urged the President to consider all

options--I repeat all options--other than the utilization of 21,500

individuals to go into that situation.

Specifically, our resolution charges the Iraqi military with taking

the lead, with taking the brunt. I reiterate, the Iraqis should be

taking the full measure of responsibility for this Baghdad campaign.

Therein rests this Senator's primary concern with the President's plan.

I say that because our American GIs have fought bravely, courageously,

and we have had sacrifice and loss of life and limb, and in no way have

they failed in the attempt to try to help the Iraqi people achieve

their freedom, achieve their Government through elections, and to

become a sovereign Nation. Now it should fall upon the over 300,000

Iraqi troops, police, and other security officials to bring about the

cessation of this violence in Baghdad.

The Iraqis are far better qualified by virtue of their understanding

of the language. They have a far better understanding of what is it

that is bringing about this sectarian violence. These are the very

people we liberated and gave them back their sovereign land and who are

now fighting themselves, Sunni upon Shia, Shia upon Sunni, with wanton

murder and criminal activity. Our forces do not understand the

language. It is hard for those here in this Chamber to go back and look

at the origins of the difference between the Sunni and Shia, which go

back some 1,400 years. Our troops shouldn't be in there trying to

decide do we shoot at a Sunni or do we shoot at a Shia. That should be

the responsibility of the Iraqi forces. That is the principal reason I

found differences with the President.

Our leaders, the Record will reflect, have tried to reconcile the

differences between our two sides. The last time I didn't support

cloture. I did that to support the institution of the Senate, because

this Senate stands apart from the House, and stands apart from

legislatures all over the world because of the right and the freedom to

debate and for all to bring forth their ideas. We are behind that now.

So far as I know, the leaders have done their best and we were not able

to achieve agreement, and now, procedurally, we are faced with the

situation of a House resolution, which will be voted on in an hour or

more, and will then be considered by the Senate. For that purpose, I

will vote cloture.

We supported the President in our resolution. As I read the House

resolution, it does not reject the President's initiative to have a

diplomatic component to his plan. The House resolution does not reject

the economic aspect of what the President puts in his plan. So I say to

my colleagues that what comes before us does not reject outright the

President's program. It directs itself to that military operation, much

as we did in S. Con. Res. 7, and says respectfully that we urge the

President to consider all options, options that were set forth in

testimony before the Armed Services Committee by General Abizaid, when

he said we don't need any more troops; by General Casey, when he was up

for confirmation and he said he thought we only needed two brigades,

not five brigades.

So it is against that background that I think our group has come

forth in response to the President's invitation and stated our case in

a very respectful way. This matter we will address, the House

resolution, I do not believe rejects the entire plan of the President.

The components of diplomacy and the components of economics are there.

It is only the question of how we employ our forces. I say the burden

falls on the Iraqi security forces.

I will submit for the Record a New York Times story which appeared

this week outlining an operation in which we had 2,500 Americans and

less than 100 Iraqi forces turned up to participate. I asked about this

yesterday when questioning the Chief of Staff of the United States Army

and the Commandant of the Marine Corps, as to what their idea of the

plan had been, and it was represented to us that there were to be joint

forces, a joint command.

Certainly this is an early report, and I cannot speak to the

authenticity of the article, but I have invited the Department of

Defense to comment on it. It indicates to me that the Americans are

bearing the brunt, not the Iraqi forces.

I ask unanimous consent that the article be printed in the Record.

I yield the floor.